
Press Release

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High School Youth Go Coast-to-Coast With Electric Car

Designed and built by high school teens, MINDDRIVE electric vehicle will stop in El Centro as part of nationwide tour

El Centro, CA — The Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) Clean Cities Coalition will be hosting a group of high school students from Kansas City, Mo., as part of their landmark cross-country tour promoting a battery-powered vehicle by their own design.

Departing from San Diego, Calif., the group will be making a pit stop at the SCAG Imperial County office in El Centro on Monday, June 11, one of many recharging stops along their 12-day, 2,400-mile journey to Jacksonville, Fla. Students will take turns driving the 1,500-pound plug-in electric vehicle, dubbed “Lotus,” and they hope to document their trip and share their story along the way.

“The primary purpose and goal is to show how a small group of students can, through exciting hands-on learning, become leaders in our society by addressing a significant issue of our time,” explained Linda Buchner, co-founder and one of the MINDDRIVE program’s 14 mentors.

The MINDDRIVE program began as an after-school program at one Kansas City high school, seeking to inspire students through experiential learning and urban workforce development. In 2010, organizers obtained non-profit status and now serve students from six area high schools. With a nearly one-to-one student-to-mentor ratio, the youth have applied practical science, math and state-of-the-art technology to design and fabricate three electric vehicles to date. “Lotus,” their most recent product, is hoping to travel 600 MPGe on this demonstration run.

The MINDDRIVE students hope to share “Lotus” with other high school students and the general public along their cross-country tour. In El Centro, SCAG’s Clean Cities Coalition has organized a welcome with elected officials and local students.

“The youth from MINDDRIVE are truly an inspiration,” said El Centro City Council Member Cheryl Viegas-Walker. “Their work shows that young people are not only interested in new clean air vehicles, but they are taking an active role in developing our sustainable future. The City of El Centro welcomes them and is looking forward to their appearance.”

At the El Centro pit stop, the MINDDRIVE vehicle will utilize a mobile, rapid charging mechanism that will allow the car's battery to re-charge in less than an hour. A full re-charge will allow the car to drive 120 miles.

"With a quick charging network in America, an electric vehicle could be viewed as something more than just an urban vehicle. It will be convenient for longer travel distances as well," Buchner added.

"SCAG's Clean Cities Coalition is proud to support the efforts of these youth," said Hasan Ikhata, Executive Director. "They are creating more awareness of clean air vehicles and the need for Plug-In Electric Vehicle infrastructure. The region is realizing this now, but these youth are leading the charge."

The California Energy Commission recently awarded SCAG's Clean Cities Coalition a grant for \$200,000 to develop Plug-In Electric Vehicle Readiness plans for the Western Riverside and South Bay regions. The planning effort will study travel and commute patterns to determine where charging stations are needed to meet a growing demand for electric vehicles. This cooperative effort includes the South Coast Air Quality Management District, Southern California Edison, and many subregions, counties, and cities as well as other public and private stakeholders.

Members of the public are welcome to attend the MINDDRIVE pit stop at SCAG's Imperial Valley office, located at 1405 N. Imperial Ave., Suite 1, in El Centro. "Lotus" and the rest of the MINDDRIVE team will be present from 12:30 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. on Monday, June 11.

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About SCAG

SCAG is the nation's largest metropolitan planning organization, representing six counties, 19 cities and more than 18 million residents. SCAG undertakes a variety of planning and policy initiatives to plan for a livable and sustainable Southern California now and in the future. For more information about SCAG's regional efforts, please visit www.scag.ca.gov.